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State of New Jersey
Department of Labor and Industry
Division of Employment Security,
NEW JERSEY STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE,
affiliated with
United States Employment Service

POST-SEASON AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PROCESSING REPORT.

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FOR

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

1949

U. S. DEPT. OF LABOR

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January, 1950

In furthering the welfare of the migrants a demonstration school for children of migrant farm workers was conducted for the second season under the joint sponsorship of the Department of Education and Labor and Industry at the Court Street School, Freehold, New Jersey. A group of 65 children were selected from migrant labor camps within a five mile radius of Freehold. The school opened July 19 and closed August 27 and sessions were held five days a week from 9:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. Emphasis was placed upon instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Other objectives were developed impressing the acceptance of social responsibility, building good health habits, a study of foods and the use of money. The school was cited by the National Education Association as a pattern for the education of migrant children.

We work very closely with the Bureau of Migrant Labor in all phases affecting the housing of the workers. No recruitment is undertaken unless and until the Bureau has inspected and passed on the housing.

The State Superintendent and the Farm Placement Supervisor are consultants on labor matters to the Bureau and attend all meetings of the Migrant Labor Board.

The Secretary of Agriculture and his department heads have been extremely helpful to our program.

Employment Service personnel receive invitations to appear at meetings of the various agricultural organizations.

D. Recruitment and Placement Problems

The 1949 season, because of the drought, accentuated the problem of wages and increasing selectivity on the part of the employer. Wages paid for picking under contract were most affected as throughout the potato area growers had long periods of idleness between diggings. The crew leaders and crews became uneasy and dissatisfied because of the idleness especially when growers began to take advantage of the situation and started hiring or rehiring at a lower rate. Some rates were adjusted downward as much as 5¢ per hundred over the grader.

Growers were more concerned over the quality of the crews than in former years. Most growers getting a new crew would always inquire as to the quality and if it were possible to obtain references from former employers.

PUERTO RICAN AND FOREIGN LABOR

During the year of 1949, 276 workers from the British West Indies were employed in this state under contract. Fifty-one were employed on a year round basis and 225 were employed by Seabrook Farms for about eight weeks. These workers were obtained from a sugar corporation in Florida and were returned to them at the end of the pea harvest.

The contracts of the 51 workers employed year-round expired on November 30. Prior to the expiration date most of the employers requested permission to hold the workers through part of 1950. Orders from all employers were placed in intra and interstate clearance to determine the availability of domestic labor.

As a result of clearance a supply of qualified labor was found on Long Island. As the employers declined to avail themselves of this labor supply no certifications were recommended by this Agency and the workers returned to their homelands.

The workers from the British West Indies rendered excellent service to industry and agriculture during their entire stay. The workers and their governmental liaison officers should be commended.

Year by year the employment of workers from Puerto Rico has increased. During 1946 approximately 300 were employed on the farms of the members of the Gloucester County Board of Agriculture. The 1949 season gave employment to 4,493 under contract. Of this number 4,076 were employed through the Gloucester County Board of Agriculture Farm Labor Project at Glassboro, New Jersey. The Farmers and Gardeners Cooperative Association at Holmdel employed 417.

The camp records indicate that 2,932 were recruited on the Island and flown to New Jersey; 1,321 workers traveled to the job at their own expense, 981 directly from the Island and 465 from New York City and Florida. That 981 came directly from Puerto Rico to the job at their own expense indicates a serious flaw in the contention of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor's claim that they can control the migration of the agricultural workers. An unrestricted flow of workers from the Island will tend to lessen the value of a written contract especially from the point of view of an employer who would rather not have any contractual obligations with either the workers or the Government of Puerto Rico.

All except a few employers were well satisfied with these workers especially where on-the-farm housing was provided.

- A. The Gloucester County Board procured workers for 805 farm employers; Farmers and Gardeners Cooperative Association acted as agent for 125 farmers.
- B. On February 15, 1949 we received a request from the Gloucester County Board of Agriculture to recommend certification to the USES for 4,000 workers from Puerto Rico.

After consultation with the Board the request was reduced to 2820, and divided into two orders, one for 2,011 dated 4/7/49 and the second for 809; dated 6/27/49.

C. Employment by months

	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Apr.</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>
Puerto Ricans	85	1988	2711	2941	3516	4490	3414	2540	225
Foreign	51	51	51	276	276	276	51	51	51

- D. The year by year increase in the use of Puerto Ricans has been closely observed to determine the effect these workers would have on the community; on wages paid to local workers for similar work; the displacement of local labor; work habits; etc.

Our investigations disclosed that with practically no exceptions the farm employers gave high praise to the personal and work habits of the workers, declaring that the Puerto Rican was the finest type of agricultural worker they had ever had. We found no instances where their employment had depressed the labor market or lowered farm wages. The investigation found them to be law abiding and temperate. However, we found a few instances where the language barrier caused the employers to change to day haul workers from Philadelphia.

There are other factors developing that may result in hiring fewer Puerto Ricans. The Gloucester County Board is currently considering the adoption of one of the following plans:

1. That the County Board divorce itself from the labor program.
2. That the Board operate as in 1949 with less service to the farmers.
3. To discontinue the program on its present status and institute a system where the Board recruits all possible help and serves the farmer for a per-head charge.

We met with the Board and offered our Services for recruitment of southern migrants or day haul workers.

The records indicate that about 25% of the workers left New Jersey for Florida. Approximately 65% returned to Puerto Rico and the remaining 10% to parts unknown.

- E. The Employment Service will continue to offer its services to all farm employers by means of circulars, newspaper articles, and by personal visits. We are confident that the program begun this year will bring greater results next season. It is entirely possible that the Board may drop the entire program and close the camp. In that event the ES would be called upon to recruit the numbers required in excess of the Puerto Ricans who are expected to arrive without recruitment contracts or prepaid transportation. This year 1,176 arrived in such fashion and the Board expects more in 1950.

EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The operation of the farm program during 1949 was considerably better than in 1948, due to the experience gained, the intensive promotion of the program by local office managers and farm placement representatives, the development of day haul pools, and the acceptance of the program by agricultural workers and employers. One of the measurements of program acceptance is placement. For the year of 1949, 99,077 farm and rural industry placements were reported by local offices, as against the 1948 total of 19,886.

For the year of 1949, 7,238 farm visits were reported by local offices, as against the 1948 total of 2,692.

The accumulation of employer records is progressing slowly as the information must be compiled visit by visit.

Every effort will be expended to increase the use of day haul crews to supplement local and migrant labor and to decrease the use of off-continent labor. The field visiting program will begin about the first of February in order to develop firm and informational orders for workers and to offer the facilities of the Employment Service to all users of agricultural labor.

Motor vehicle laws in the states along the eastern seaboard should be amended, or reciprocal agreements be entered into between states, so that agricultural crew leaders would be permitted to operate in the various states under the motor vehicle license issued by the state in which the crew leader resides.

We also recommend that a system be devised whereby crew leaders would be issued a license by the state in which he resides attesting to the responsibility and qualifications of the leader. The crew leader and crew should be evaluated in each state of operation and the information forwarded to the agency in the state issuing the license.